



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 2004
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TDD (202) 514-1888

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES ARREST TEXAS MAN FOR MAKING BIAS-MOTIVATED THREAT ON TEXAS ISLAMIC CENTER

Patriot Act Used to Address Threat in Near-Real Time

WASHINGTON, D.C.- The Department of Justice today announced the arrest of an El Paso man allegedly responsible for threatening to destroy an area Islamic Center. Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights R. Alexander Acosta and United States Attorney for the Western District of Texas Johnny Sutton announced the arrest of Jared Bjarnason for allegedly sending a threat to the El Paso Islamic Center on April 18, 2004.

Bjarnason, a 30-year-old resident of El Paso, Texas, was arrested yesterday following a complaint filed in the United States District Court for the Western District of Texas. The complaint charges the defendant with sending an electronic mail message to the Islamic Center threatening violence against the Center and its members. Specifically, the message threatened to burn the Islamic Center's mosque to the ground, if hostages held in Iraq were not freed within three days.

In investigating the threat, the El Paso office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation employed a provision of the USA PATRIOT Act, which permits providers of electronic mail services to provide electronic communications directly to law enforcement officials "if the provider reasonably believes that an emergency involving immediate danger of death or serious physical injury to any person justifies disclosure of the information."

Absent this provision, investigating authorities would have had to obtain a separate search warrant from each service provider through whose system the e-mail traveled, a process which could have taken over 30 days. With the Patriot Act's authority, agents were able to address the threat in near-real time.

The defendant is scheduled to have an initial appearance today before U.S. Magistrate Richard P. Mesa at 2:00 p.m. MT.

The crime charged is punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine. The defendant is considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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